

SPINDRIFT

VERSES
AND
POEMS




EDWIN·CARLILE·LITSEY



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SPINDRIFT

VERSES AND POEMS

BY

EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY



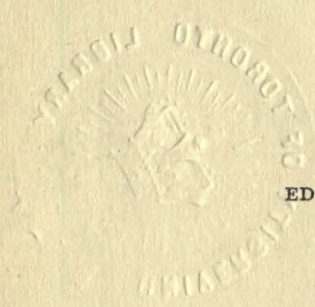
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EDWIN CARLILE LITSEY

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DEDICATION

*To memories and moments that are gone;
To whispered words recalling hopes and fears;
To all the tender ghosts which, dark or dawn,
Come stealing on white feet from yesteryears.*

Thanks are due the following magazines for permission to reprint here poems which they had formerly used:

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—THE AUTHOR.

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SPINDRIFT



LOVE'S HOUSE.

LOVE, I would build a house where you and I
Might live the jewelled hours as they fly.

Beside some stream which murmurs in its sleep
Soft, wordless runes which charmed the gods of old,
And on whose breast the shimmering dimples fold
The struggling sunbeams as they dance and leap;
Where osiers tremble to the current's flow,
And laughing, gurgling, swirling eddies go.

Within some storied grove where once the feet
Of all the woodland gods were wont to stray,
And where the echo of their revels gay
Might yet be heard in quivering cadence sweet;
Where Pan and Hylas, Artemis and Faun,
And pink-cheeked Herakles raced with the dawn.

Where orange trees and pomegranate and palm
Shall be perennial joys unto our sight,
And scent of roses through the still, cool night
Shall make our dreams the echo of a psalm;
And, far away, the low boom of the sea
Shall haunt our House of Love in Arcady.

Spindrift

How shall our house be builded?—Not of stone!
Nor veined marble; onyx, brick, or brass.
Of such are crypts and vaults where dead souls pass,
And gaols where prisoned wretches cringe and groan.
Love's House has naught to do with Death and Sin,
But Song and Laughter are enthroned therein.

Of wood shall it be made; warm-hued and fine;
Of sandal and of myrrh, of cedar brought
From far-off Lebanon, and chastely wrought
To arabesque and filigree design.
And from the deep, high-columned portico,
We'll rob the golden moments ere they go.

A court I'll fashion in its central place,
With tessellated floor of brown and gold.
And couches draped with mystic Tyrean fold
Will wait my strength, and hunger for your grace.
And here, when Noon her poppy garments spread,
We'll come to slumber on our scented bed.

Within each room Art shall sweet Nature bring:
Vines shall o'erclamber latticed ceilings high,
And wine-red roses with white lilies vie;
While throughout all the house wild birds shall sing.
Nor wall nor door herein shall intervene,
Where I shall be Love's slave, and you, Love's queen.

Thus shall the chambers separated be:
By slim, brown columns rising clean and fair;
The slim, brown trunks of trees which Nature bear
And nurtured till this hour for you and me.
Between them, hand in hand, from room to room,
We'll stroll and mock Life's shuttle, and Fate's loom.

Verses and Poems

And then within a wonder-spot we'll stand:

Its floor of curly moss, its walls dim lit

By orchids' lamps, where fairies sway and flit

On wings diaphanous—a pearl-gray band.

And in the leafy greenery overhead

The moonflower and the white moth will be wed.

No outer discord ever shall be heard.

A tunicked shepherd boy shall keep his flocks,

Lying beside the stream with wind-blown locks,

Throughout the whole day speaking not a word.

Piping upon his reed some madrigal,

To charm the sylvan silence pastoral.

Love, will you take my hand and come with me?

You are my dream perfected, absolute.

O, I have tasted of your lips' red fruit

And I am fettered strong; I may not flee!

Your eyes' gray pools—your gold hair's mystery—

Come to our House of Love in Arcady!

THE CALL ETERNAL

I need you, mate of my manhood,
I need you every day;
I need to hear your voice of cheer,
And the love-words you will say.
It's not that you're simply woman,
But the fact that without you
My life would be as a withered tree,
Unblessed by sun or dew.

I need you, girl of my dreaming,
Deep-eyed, clean and strong;
I need your face in the sweet home-place—
Your smile when the day is long.
I need your simple presence;
I need your woman's ways;
I need your arms when the world's alarms
Go shuttling through the days.

I need you as compass and balance,
To hold my life from Sin;
For a man may stray in a shameful way
If Love dwells not within.
I need your hand's firm gripping,
Your faith that I'll win the fight;
Then none who dwell in earth or hell
Could tempt me from the right.

Verses and Poems

I need you, mate for the battle,
To steel my fighting arm;
And deep in my heart, in a place apart
I'll keep you, safe from harm.
I need the thought of your presence,
Where tides of business flow;
I need the rune of a cradle croon
When the evening lamp's aglow.

I need you—need—you—need you—
O girl of the cool gray eyes!
There is work to do for me and you
While the sun yet lights the skies.
My call is the call eternal,
'Twas born when Time began;
And you have come to my side and home
Since Eden first knew man!

THE SONG OF THE WIND

I am the mighty wind!

I thunder down the canyon where the riven rocks are piled;
I scourge the depths of ocean vast into a fury wild;
I sweep whole cities from the earth to mark my fearful path;
I am my Master's servant, and I wreak my Master's wrath!

I am the helpful wind!

I bear the factory smoke away, I cleanse the city street;
Across the void I take the word that nations each may greet;
I bring the breath of summer, and the sails of vessels fill;
I am My Master's servant, and I do my Master's will.

I am the joyous wind!

I murmur in the daisies and I dance amid the grass;
I smile upon the streamlet where both light and shadow
pass;
My myriad fingers smite the chords the forest trees among;
I am my Master's servant, and I sing my Master's song.

I am the solemn wind!

I chant the dirges of the year, and gently, leaf by leaf,
I strip the trees and weave a robe to hide earth's face of
grief.
I take the blanket of the snow, and spread it o'er the fields;
I am my Master's servant, and I guard His yearly yields.

Verses and Poems

I am the healing wind!

I come with fairy touches to the fevered brow of pain;
I cool the burning pillow where an aching head hath lain.
To lungs oppressed I offer balm which makes the pale cheek
glow.

I am my Master's servant, and my Master's mercy show.

I am the loving wind!

I coax the buds of all the world to blossom and unfold;
I offer to both high and low the sunshine's scattered gold;
I cheer and help and comfort, and earth's weary children
bless;

I am my Master's servant, and my Master's love express.

A CANNON SPEAKS AT ARLINGTON.

To-day but a piece of iron, I rest on my carriage worn,
And silently dream of battles past; of fields that were
furrowed and torn;
Of the order quick; of the double march; of the toiling of
horses and men;
Of a nightlong drudge o'er a sodden earth where a road
had never been.

Now grass grows green about me, and the rows of countless
graves
Stretch into the perspective like the shimmer of low
waves.
'Twas I that caused those graves to be, and now I stand
on guard,
Barred from the joy of battle and the shriek of shell and
shard.

But yet my visions come to me—I see again the rout,
I hear again the fiendish scream of grapeshot, and the
shout
Of some war-maddened general, and in the grinding fray
I see the men drop here and there without a chance to
pray.

I see myself upon a hill—dragged there with curse and
groan—
And as I spew my red death forth I hear an answering moan.
My black mouth gapes for more and more, I glut myself
with steel;
Then with a horrid laugh disgorge—and watch the soldiers
reel!

Verses and Poems

All that is gone. To-night the moon looks down upon my
form;

There's a sleepy chirrup in my throat where a nesting bird
keeps warm.

A sprig of ivy lies across the fuse-hole, clogged with rust;
While the ancient carriage under me is going back to dust.

I've seen red war; I've felt hot blood, and death to me was
naught;

And now for forty years and more, I've sat, and dreamed,
and thought.

And it seems to me, when I think of those who lie beneath
this sod,

It is better to give a bird a home, than to send men's souls
to God!

ARCADY OR BABYLON

In the sky were the lights of the city, and the youth
looked on afar,
Across the fields of waving grain, over the pasture bar.
The earth was an emerald chalice, and 'twas filled with
the wine of life;
The youth had drunk till his soul was light, and he longed
for a sterner strife.

"I will answer the city's calling." (O life was big in his
heart!)

"I am tired of the clod and the furrow; the plow, the
sickle, the cart.

I am tired of this way of living; I am tired of the old
routine;

I'm going to the broad, white streets, where something
can be seen!"

"*Think well, O stalwart yeoman!*" I answered, "*Think ye
well!*

*The fresh, pure fountains of the earth are all here, where
you dwell.*

*There's health in the toil of your body; there's peace in your
muscle's strain;*

*There's plenty for your every need, and sweet sleep for your
brain."*

"But listen!" the youth made answer; "Don't you hear
that soft, sweet call?

Don't you see her eyes of splendor; don't you feel her
beauty's thrall?

Don't you see her arms outstretching, her beckoning,
milkwhite hands?

Don't you see her fair hair floating in mistlike, silken
strands?"

Verses and Poems

*"'Tis a lie, O stalwart yeoman! The sweet call which you
hear
Will turn into a serpent's hiss when once you draw
anear!
The teeth which smile a welcome now will rend, and tear,
and slay;
The acid from her poisoned lips will eat your soul away!"*

*"But look!" the youth protested, as he leaned o'er the
pasture bar;*

*"There's gold to win and joy to clasp—I'll go where such
things are!*

*Within the city's open gates are pleasures strange and
new,*

*And her face of light is calling me! Does it not call to
you?"*

*"One time it called, my yeoman; like you I answered,
'Here!'*

*And when I wakened from the dream my soul was dry
and sere.*

*Go back to the clod and the furrow, lie close to the heart of
life;*

*And in some vine-embowered door find you a faithful
wife."*

*I looked at his clean young manhood, at his muscle, and
brawn, and bone,*

*Then turned and went down the winding path, leaving
him there alone.*

*In the sky were the lights of the city and the youth
looked on afar,*

Across the fields of waving grain, over the pasture bar.

MUSIC

Last night I sat before the ash-lit grate;
The charm of midnight and of silence made
The hour consecrate to thoughts which strayed
Flame-winged and holy—of my little mate.

And as the shadows broadened, and the gloom
Laid velvet fingers on my hands and face;
And Slumber tip-toed to my brain apace—
I heard your low laugh tremble through the room!

Nor all the music in the land to be,
Nor all the joyous might of seraph song
Will wake the rapture, deep, and sweet, and strong,
Which thrilled me at that dear, remembered glee.

DE PROFUNDIS

O thick the night is where I blindly grope,
And lures I know are false seductive hope
Flaunt in the darkness, while I fight and pray
For strength and light to keep the narrow way.

The wounds! the scars! the rending torture-pain!
The agony of heart, and soul, and brain!
And when the glory-light shines in the west
Will I be clean? Will I have stood the test?

WHEN I COME HOME

When I come home, worn with the fretful day,
And find you waiting with your smile of love;
Your arms' soft pressure all my cares remove;
Your lips strange magic all my fears allay.

When I come home—when my feet seek the shrine
Our love has builded for our worship sweet,
I pass from out a world of sham and cheat
Into a tiny world of truth divine.

When I come home—it matters not how strong
The battle has beset me—in that hour
When I come home I feel your subtle power,
Which flows in soothing waves, like a low song.

When I come home my wonder wakes afresh
Before the mystery of your woman's way;
The skill to take and keep my heart alway;
A captive thrilling in a magic mesh.

When I come home, dear; come, and find you not,
What will I do? . . . There'll be no light to see;
For night and pain that hour will 'compass me,
And on the cross I'll find the common lot.

THE CREED OF THE CHEERFUL

I believe in saying the best I can
In every way, of my fellow-man.

I believe in speaking a word of hope
To the desolate ones who in darkness grope.

And I think that to bind up a broken heart
Is more marvelous far than a work of art.

I believe there is joy in excess of pain;
I believe there is good in excess of bane.

I believe that we each must walk with care,
That none are too strong for the evil snare.

I believe that in putting ourselves aside
We nearer come to the Crucified.

I believe each life is given the power
To meet the needs of the passing hour.

Verses and Poems

SEA AND MAID

"Why do you call to me so, O Sea?
What is the bond 'twixt you and me?"

And the Ocean said
From its ancient bed:

*"There was a time when all the earth
I held in my arms, like a child at birth."*

"Mother of mystery, speak me now,
And give to my ears the why, and how."

And the Ocean's word
She plainly heard:

*"The sun's white blast, and the earth's red heart;
They drove me back from the land apart."*

"How long ago, Forever One?
How long in the past was this thing done?"

And the Ocean's sigh
Bore this reply:

*"Millions of years ago, O Maid,
Before aught crept, or swam, or played."*

"But what is the lure which draws me here,
And takes away all thought of fear?"

And the Ocean spoke
As its ripples broke:

*"One day there stirred within my womb
Something that lived, as in a tomb."*

"What was this Something—tell me true—
Which stirred one day in the womb of you?"

And the Ocean smiled
On its little child:

*"'Twas Life's beginning, Maid of Earth,
And I am the Mother who gave you birth!"*

HER VIOLIN

She stands beside the fireplace, broad and low,
And slowly lifts to poise her magic bow.
Soft fire-glow lights her dress from neck to hem;
The lamp-shade folds the flame. A diadem
Her hair appears—dull gold and copper blent;
Her chin rests fondly on the instrument.
Then, far and faint, an eerie sound I hear,
An elfin tone, which might be bliss or fear,
Trembling to life within the rose-hued room;
Waking to rarer charm her face's bloom.
Shut-eyed and still, my soul is swept away
Upon a tide whose force I would not stay.
Impassioned, wailing like a thing in pain;
Shrieking in terror through a night of rain!
Then sinking to low sobs—a heart misused;
The plaintive, tear-filled tones of love abused.
The symphony of sound flows fainter; slow,
Charged with tense passion glides the magic bow.
Anon I see a moonlit meadow lie,
Full-starred with flowers where a stream purls by.
And spirit strains are pulsing on the air,
Where Nature kneels alone in solemn prayer!

Vibrant and full a clear crescendo rings!
And then white fingers mute the throbbing strings.

A PORTRAIT OF HER

Standing straight-limbed, in garb of purest white
Whose folds caress her form in touches light.
Her fingers, supple, slim, are loosely laced;
Her gown but slightly girdled at the waist,
Revealing the firm swell of rounded hips.
The painter falters at her perfect lips
Where joy and sadness blend so subtly sweet.
Her chin a symphony of grace complete.
Her nose retroussé (I must tell the truth),
One blemish on the wonder of her youth.
A brow of samite; hair which baffles me,
Where lights and shadows dance in witchery.
And eyes which ever mutely call my soul
To struggle upward to that shining goal.

A SOUTHERN NIGHT

Formless and still, close wrapped in darkness dense,
The summer landscape breathed its redolence;
Till, touched by moon-dawn—a magician's rod—
It bloomed a flower in the hand of God.

IT IS BETTER TO FIGHT

It is better to fight than to weakly yield,
But, ah, dear God, 'tis hard!
For the narrow road is a stony road,
And is swept by shell and shard!

It is better to fight—but over the wall
I see a broad, bright way;
Where music sounds, and Pleasure's voice
Calls me to come and play.

Before me stretches a barren lane
(At its end is glory, they say),
But my feet are tired, and my shoulders ache,
And my soul won't always pray.

It is better to fight—the test of a man—
But the road is rough and long;
And there, just over the boundary wall,
Is rest, and pleasure, and song.

THE WAIF

On the deep blue breast of the summer sky,
A tiny cloud went floating by;
And I saw it a child of the Sun and the Sea,
In the cradle of Infinity.

Verses and Poems

SUNSET

The far east darkens with encroaching glooms
Which creep from Night's low portals, flaunting plumes
Shot through with sullen splendors. Overhead,
Where all day airy fleets have softly sped
The curtain of the dusk is being drawn
By tender hands we may not look upon.
And O! the glory of the distant west!
Where palaces in heavenly grandeur drest
Dissolve, and pulse with flame, and form anew,
And shake their misty banners to the blue
Dim arch above. Deep in a wondrous sea
Of onyx, topaz, pearl, chalcedony,
The cloud-forms tumble in a ruin vast!
Now Titan arms of fire are upward cast,
With fingers tremulous clothed all in light.
Which search the void above, and tapers bright
Beneath their power all the arch illumine!—
Above the western sea a smoky spume
Writhes dimly, and one vague, belated boat
Weighs anchor by a sombre castle's moat.

A TRUTH

Though volumes flow from underneath my pen,
To please and entertain the minds of men;
Yet would my toil be as a trumpet's bray,
Did it not help some soul upon its way.

Spindrift

LIFE

A cry in the night and a fight for breath;
(In the background ever the Angel of Death).

A span of years where we battle and grope;
(In the background ever the Angel of Hope).

Sweet peace at last to brain and breast,
As we creep to the arms of the Angel of Rest.

THE END OF THE ROAD

What will I find at the end of the road?
Faith, I can not tell!
But I know my shoulders will miss the load
They have borne, or ill, or well.

What will I find at the end of the road?
Better I should not know;
But my back will miss the whip and goad
On the new way which I go.

Will I find sweet rest? Ah, yes! I know
At least I will come to this;
And I pray, dear heart, your face will show
Me the path to the plains of bliss.

THE WHEAT FIELD

O the charm and the grace of a field of wheat!
Where a thousand million twinkling feet
Shimmer and shake in the morning glow,
In a fairy dance on the stalks below!

And out from the many-columned grain
A perfume blended by sun and rain,
Distilled in the crucible of night,
Creeps up in waves of pure delight.

Floating on wings of web and down,
Like jewels scattered from a crown,
The rainbow-tinted butterflies,
A vagrant band, reel drunkenwise.

In swoops which dip like the bending wheat,
A redbird passes on pinions fleet;
And a saffron-belted bumblebee
Hums on his journey noisily.

A rod or more from the crazy fence,
Where at night the fairies spread their tents,
The breeze has suddenly made a gap,
And there, upsprung from the earth's warm lap

A blood-red poppy lifts its face;
Then the grain goes back to its rightful place.
But I know I have seen the heart of the field,
Though deep in the swaying wheat concealed.

Spindrift

TWO LANES

One lies embosomed by a meadow's close
Girt in by fences—two long, zigzag rows.
Its center holds a path, dusty and warm,
Indented deep with foot-prints of the farm.
And green, sweet grasses fringe its either side
(A scented bier whereon some flower has died!)
A peace from Nature's heart abideth here.
In Summer's shine; when Winter's snows appear;
Spring's bursting buds, and Autumn's gorgeous hues—
A calm serenity the air imbues.
And those whose feet pass down this verdant lane
From honest thrift are making honest gain.
And at its further end a living stream
Yields joy to thirsty lips, with glint and gleam.

One lies within a city's stony heart,
A cheerless channel of a sordid mart.
Cold walls enclose it, bleak and grim and gray,
Whose towering bulks hold out the light of day.
And if, by chance, a sunbeam finds this place,
It dies in terror at the headlong race.
Things! Living things which writhe, and twist, and crawl;
And fight, and steal, and kill, and tear, and maul!
A mass of human beings rushing on
As though no more a blessed day would dawn.
And those whose feet pass down this stone-paved lane
Are sacrificing all for sake of gain.
And at the lane's end is a God of Clay,
Which mocks the maddened worshippers who pray!

THE AUTUMN WOOD

Torched into beauty by the frost, a spot
Aglow with flame which yet consumeth not,
The autumn wood stands robed in living fire;
The season's vast, majestic funeral pyre!
And sunset streaming through each long, still aisle,
Gilds all the tree trunks, standing file on file,
Transmutes to gold the heaps of fallen leaves;
Haloes her hair where some sad Dryad grieves
All desolate within her sylvan bower;
Gazing with tears upon a lifeless flower!
Sweet silence lingers here from dawn till dusk;
The breezes bear a strange, elusive musk.
Like tongues of flame the red leaves gently fall,
And weave above the earth a scarlet pall.

THE VICTOR

The battle hero does his deeds of might
Impelled by frenzy, and before men's sight.
Grant him his glory; he was brave to fight.

The man of peace hath even greater need
For strength, each day to do some worthy deed,
And hold in leash the Beasts of Shame and Greed.

TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

How often have I sat beneath thy spell,
O Sorcerer, who feared nor death nor hell!
But, like thine own bird "singing in the rain,"
Thy voice comes true and clear above thy pain.
O wanderer, whose lips made no complaint!
Brave exile, fighting on, though weak and faint;
No notes of coward fear you ever sang;
Your tones with vibrant hope and courage rang.
And we, who read thy messages to-day,
Gather fresh strength to pass upon our way.
Sleep on, sweet soul, beneath the Southern Cross;
Ours is the gain, Samoa's is the loss!

THE DEN

In my heart is a den—a fearful place,
And the names of the beasts I have to face
Are Greed, and Envy, and Anger, and Shame,
As they wildly fight for my good name.

They rise with the dawn, and their restless tread
Awakes in my bosom a sense of dread,
But I walk secure from claw and tooth
When I hold my heart in the light of Truth.

Verses and Poems

THE BEECH WOOD

So like a vast cathedral wide it seems,
Sentient with beauty from the slant sunbeams,
And clothed with grandeur which is all its own;
Made musical by many a forest tone.

I stand enchanted as the sun swings down
Below the hills, and green shades turn to brown.
And by the gentle rustling overhead,
I know I stand where Nature's prayers are said.

THE FOREST AT NIGHT

I stand alone within the forest's heart,
From fretting, struggling humankind apart.
Night spreads its wings of rest above my head,
And shadows stalk dim aisles with muffled tread.
The fever-fret of strife forsakes me now,
For from each trunk, and leaf, and spreading bough
A soothing essence steals upon my soul,
Heals all its bitter wounds, and makes it whole!
How sweet the gloom—the quiet, restful gloom!
For greed and bickering there is no room.
No room for anything but grateful rest,
With my tired head upon Night's tender breast.
The darkness deepens, and the dear old trees
Entwine their arms with gentle sough of leaves,
And myriad of whispers upward rise;
The forest's orison to gem-set skies.

Spindrift

THE SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN

I have been for all the ages; naught but God do I obey;
I have known the primal blackness which preceded Night
and Day.

When the earth was taking form
In the midst of strife and storm
I arose in might from nothing, and I shall endure
for aye!

I have seen the myst'ries awful which my Master's hand
hath wrought;

I have seen a frenzied chaos unto peaceful valleys brought.

I have seen the trees and plains,
Rivers, beasts, and birds and grains
March to their appointed places, where before there was
but naught.

I have seen old races wither, I have seen new races rise;
I have slept beneath the flood which flowed from out the
wrathful skies.

I have seen the æons pass
Like swift shadows o'er the grass,
And my heart grows ever younger with a youth which
never dies.

In the deep unmined immensity of earth my feet
are set,

And my head is in the ether, where the tides of wind
are met.

I commune with stars and sun,
For their God and mine are one,
And my life is calm and peaceful, free from carking care
or fret.

Verses and Poems

I receive the snows of heaven; when they melt I give
increase
To the lowlands spreading 'round me, and my power
shall never cease.
On my breast I take the gale;
Meet and conquer storm and hail;
In the shadow of my being is security and peace!

MY PHILOSOPHY

Nor more, nor less, would I demand of Fate
Than strength to work, and health. I'll gladly wait
The triumphs by the way. I'll count me blest
With bread and wine, friends, home, and painless rest.

MY HOPE

My hope is not for piles of gold ;
Nor honor great I'd seek to hold.
And when my spirit leaves the earth,
Let no one say: "What was he worth?"
Instead, this would I have them say:
"A gentle soul has passed away.
His heart was humble, and his deeds
Would make for us the best of creeds.
His monument outlasts all stone;
The deep love of the friends he's known."

Verses and Poems

THE HEART-CRY

One time when the moon hung over the world,
And the night her dusky flags unfurled,
I held you close in my arms, my sweet!
(O the thrill of the heart when warm lips meet!)

And the starshine gathered about your hair
Was a nimbus of glory strange and rare;
Your eyes were stars to the soul of me.
(O why should the miracle cease to be?)

Your broken words I could scarcely hear;
I glowed with the fervor of love and fear.
But your warm breath burned my cheek like fire.
(O how could that sweet devotion tire?)

To-night the same moon rides above;
'Tis pale as the dust of your faithless love.
And my heart breaks slowly on its bier.
(O where is that vanished yester-year?)

MAN AND WOMAN

A man gave fortunes just to see his name
Thrust upward in the fickle light of fame.

A woman, silent, let her heart break, slow,
To save a dear one from a cup of woe.

ANSON, THE SLAYER

The code of the mountains does not run
With the code of those in the light of law;
For a hill-man's woman and dog and gun
Are his as long as he can draw.

But a fool there was who took to bride
A girl who had lain by Anson's side.

Anson the slayer, the bearded man;
Anson the chief, whose aim was true;
Anson, the leader of his clan,
Who looked with love on brown-eyed Lou;
Looked, and took to his shuck-made bed
The mountain girl he never wed.

Rough was his wooing, and rough his love;
Lust's red flame began to wane;
And then his greeting was blow or shove,
But the woman-child did not complain.
For this was the fate all women knew,
And this was the fate of black-haired Lou.

She cooked his meals and washed his shirt,
She oiled his gun on the doorstep seat;
She bound with care each bullet hurt,
And crouched, a chattel, at his feet.
For he was Anson, the bearded man;
Anson, the leader of his clan.

Verses and Poems

Then down the trail one summer night
Kidface Joe fared on his way;
She sat on the step and the moon was bright,
And the stranger stopped to say good-day.
Then down he sat when he heard her tell
Anson had gone, some strife to quell.

It chanced, as the moon sank down the west,
That Lou and Joe crept back the trail,
For the girl was sore from her thorn-set nest,
And Kidface Joe had told a tale—
The same old tale which women heed,
Whatever their race, whatever their breed.

Now Anson laughed in evil strain
When he came home to his empty shack,
He could quickly get his girl again,
But her lover—then his face grew black
And he took from the wall his rifle bright,
Which would shoot as far as his eye could sight.

High on the side of a craggy spur,
Back of a boulder rough and grim,
Anson the slayer thought of her;
Anson the slayer thought of him.
A stern home-coming Lou should know;
A steel-nosed ball for Kidface Joe!

A fortnight free from all pursuit
Had given Joe a foolish ease.
Sweet to his mouth was the stolen fruit;
Sweet Love's cup to the ruby lees.
And Fate employs no herald's horn
To usher in a doomsday morn.

Spindrift

Anson the slayer's bushy jaw
 Pressed the stock of his deadly gun;
As far below on the trail he saw
 A plume of dust where there had been none.
 With a tuneless song on his lips he came;
 While, cruel-eyed, his foe took aim.

A bridled mule with sharp backbone
 Gallops unriden down the pass;
The tuneless song becomes a moan,
 And a man lies still on the wayside grass.
 He has passed the gate and paid his toll;
 On the tan of his temple a round, pink hole.

The code of the mountains does not run
 With the code of those who are city bred;
For a hill-man's woman and dog and gun
 Are held by the power of steel and lead.
 But a fool there was who took to bride
 A girl who had lain by Anson's side.

SPRING SONG

Clear from the thicket where young buds gleam
A song pours forth in a silvery stream.
And the bird-voice twitters and carols a tune
Which speaks of the joy of a coming June.

The crisp, clean air is good to smell,
As it creeps in waves from a cool, deep dell;
And the tang from the forest is sweet and rare
As the odors which pagan priests prepare.

The pale green grasses quiver and bend,
And drink the warmth which the sun-rays lend;
And deep in a sheltered hollow warm
A tiny flower takes shape and form.

The brown bee tries his wings again
From the cloistered hive where months he's lain;
And a sweet perfume steals faintly up
From the bowl where the bee alights to sup.

THE DEAD TREE

Alone amid a glad, green breadth of life,
Insensible to calm, or storm, or strife;
A gray, grim tower in the forest's heart,
Shunned even by the birds; accursed, apart.
The spreading limbs once clothed in vivid green
Are stark and bare, with yawning gaps between.
And where sweet choristers their matins sung
A desecrated fane, with silence hung.
And O, the pity of a lifeless tree!
The pathos of such blasted majesty!
Stretching gaunt arms to heaven in supppliance vain,
Responsive not to sun, or Spring, or rain;
A scorched and twining channel down its bole—
The path by which the lightning seared its soul.
How bravely and how gladly it had stood,
A king with kings amid the ancient wood.
Sheltering with its might the timid things
Which crept, or ran, or came on fluttering wings.
Uprearing its proud head against the gale,
And welcoming the storm, and snow, and hail.
And then—the bolt! its fibres shrivelled, dried;
So, in submission bent, the great oak died.

MY WANTS

I do not crave a palace high,
Nor princely retinue;
Enough for me a cottage nigh
A rose-bed where rich colors vie—
And you, sweetheart, and you.

I would not seek to clamber up
The tricky heights of fame;
But sweet contentment let me sup
At home, with you to mix the cup
Sweetheart, my fairy dame.

Nor heaps of gold nor jewels fine
I set my heart upon;
The jewels in your eyes are mine,
And ever in my own they shine
Like stars at early dawn.

A cot, with love to guard the door,
A mother's voice to sing;
A baby's feet upon the floor—
Who dares to say that I am poor?
I'm richer than a king!

NECROMANCY

The Spring night came as a lover would,
And drew to its breast a green young bud.

The dew came later with moisture sweet,
And a warm rain followed on pinions fleet.

The stars came out with their luring gleam—
On the rosebud's head fell a soft, white beam.

Then the stars and the night and the wind and the dew
All wrought together, and soon there grew

On the stem where the shy green bud had been
A blood-red rose of a satin sheen!

THE FALL O' THE YEAR

Brown leaves close clinging to the sunburned hills,
Or lying sodden in the sluggish rills.
And woodlands vast with canopies all rent,
Showing the gnarled trunks, and bare limbs bent.
And stubble, glowing golden, specked with rust,
And twined with sickly vines o'er cast with dust.
The quail's clear challenge rings out bold and true
From leafy covert drenched with diamond dew.
The forest's front a vast kaleidoscope
Of brown and crimson, gold and heliotrope.
And deep within some densely wooded dell
A wood-bird summons, like a silver bell!
And O! the glorious pageant of the Fall!
Marching in solemn state to Winter's thrall.
A spectacle of grandeur which the eye
Can not behold, save in rich ecstasy.
The Master Painter here has touched His world
With splendor, as of countless flags unfurled.
And day by day the gorgeous retinue
Changes and passes, and is ever new.
A masque of color on the Earth's great stage,
Enacted year by year, from age to age.

EARLY SPRING

The sun is shy and the wind is cool,
And dark is the breast of the spreading pool.

The clouds uncertain what to do,
Hiding and showing sky of blue.

A faint, far chirp comes up the breeze
From the leafless limbs of apple trees.

A summons sweet to the laggard year
To hasten the resurrection near.

In the hidden channels of fibre and root
The sap of life begins to shoot,

And a single bee on stiffened wing,
Seeks some early blossoming.

THE WOODLAND POOL

Sweet solitudes where wing-strokes gently sift
The piney-scented, sentient semi-gloom;
And long-stemmed flowers dip, and sway, and lift
Their drowsy heads, drugged by their own perfume.
And spaces spanned with shadowy bars of shade,
And leafy lanes, moss-carpeted and dim,
And at a lane's end, in a sylvan glade,
The woodland pool lies, with its grassy rim.
Then down the lane's hushed way a figure glides—
A fairy form—a Naiad of the wood;
With virgin limbs aglow and rounded sides,
And lips red-pouting from her heart's rich blood.
So to the green-fringed pool; then on the bank
She stands, the spirit of a mystic shrine;
Her milk-white feet enmeshed in grasses rank,
Her body sweet with musk of eglantine.
Slow to the water cool she yields her form;
Her face a lily floating, pure and white,
Her graceful hands upheld, pink-palmed and warm
Fondle her tresses free in vain delight.
A bird voice tells her that a hunter bold
Invades her haunts; in haste she seeks the shore,
Shakes her wet hair about her fold on fold,
And gliding, glinting, seeks her hidden door.

BANISHED

I was given a garden in which to dwell
In the days of my untried Youth;
And the Keeper showed me the Path of Life,
Guarded by Virtue and Truth.

And the Keeper said: "This much is thine
To use and to enjoy;
The rest is the fruit of the serpent's spawn,
Which you must not employ."

And so I walked with Virtue and Truth,
Happy in each pure dawn;
Until, one night, with my brain afire,
I clasped the serpent's spawn.

Then sorrowful was the Keeper's face
As he led me through the gate;
And cast me out in a desert spot,
Where waited Lust and Hate.

Oh! black were the clouds which covered me,
And black was my heart with Sin;
And black was the stony ground about,
And black my soul within.

I struggled back to the garden gate,
But lo! an angel there
With flaming sword and flashing eyes
Stood guard by the portals fair.

Verses and Poems

I've wandered far, in many lands,
Since Virtue and Truth I slew;
And ever I seek the pathway lost
Which leads to the spot I knew.

Some day I'll find the gate again,
(For the penalty I've paid);
Then the angel will stand aside and smile,
And I'll pass in unafraid.

ASHES

I've eaten of forbidden fruit; I've stooped
And put my mouth to founts the world calls sin.
I've taken to my breast poor, gold-bought joys;
Questing in vain some happiness to win.

But I, who once possessed Love absolute,
Can garner now naught but the husks of things;
The richest fruit is ashes on my lips;
Each phantom bliss a two-edged sword which stings.

AUTUMN

As she who grieves for one who slowly dies,
So Autumn sits with sad and mournful eyes
Viewing the gorgeous wreck which Time has made:
The tattered banners of Spring's gay parade,
And Summer's waving pennons drooping low
Like shredded tapestries with fire aglow.
Her court all desolated of the green
Glad splendor of the tree leaves' glossy sheen;
Her limpid pools with sodden leaves defiled
Her forest floor in rich mosaic tiled;
This soon to merge into the waiting earth,
And shape the wonder of a season's birth!
Through aisles which once the wild bird filled with song
Now sounds the drawn-out, dolorous tree-frog's gong,
And by the rotten log once decked with flowers
The cricket wails through lonely, solemn hours.
Queen of a kingdom fading day by day,
She braids her hair for sleep. Then, far away,
The North Wind rises, shivering down the sky,
And Autumn trembles, and prepares to die.

PUPPY LOVE

We, older grown and idolless, make light
Of that which once burned in our own hearts too;
We flout the flame no worldly taints imbue,
Which rises from Youth's virgin soul, snow-white.

Yet who would not bring back the days of trust!
When heaven beamed from eyes of brown or blue;
When though all else proved false, yet well we knew
Love would remain, secure from moth and rust.

Why should we mock? God's pity! Let us weep
That Life has led us to the cynic's place;
Let's pass young love with awed, averted face,
For here pure hearts their holy vigils keep!

THE MOTHER-CALL

Far back of piled-up æons,
On a thousand lives' dim thread;
I hear a voice that summons—
That speaks to my heart and head.

The voice is strong, but pleading;
It shakes my modern soul;
I gaze on past and present
As on palimpsest scroll.

Then forth from office boredom,
And forth from city's grill,
I follow the voice that summons,
With all my nerves a-thrill.

I follow with steam and sinew;
And then, in vasty wild,
Where great trees chant their matins,
I'm home!—an outcast child!

But the ancient mother cometh;
And rests my aching head.
She makes my pillow gently,
And croons to me, abed.

The shackles of greed fall from me;
The strength of the earth creeps in.
I have crossed the spanning æons
To the spot where I once had been.

Verses and Poems

THE FEUD

A flash, a shot, and the echo sped
Up the deep ravine where a man lay dead!

His tribesmen heard of the deed by night,
And they armed themselves for the bitter fight;

And month by month, and year by year,
They killed with an oath, a jest or a jeer.

They slew in the open, they slew in the bush;
In the glare of day, or the moonlight's hush.

The crack of a rifle would split the dark,
And a human being lie still and stark!

And the owl would hoot from the lonely wood,
And hie him away from the smell of blood.

Artifice, treachery, guile and sin,
Reigned in the hearts of the fierce hill-men.

Blood called for blood, and craft for craft,
And when one was slain, another laughed.

And when the rifle had done its work
From the ambushed shade where a man might lurk

A thing which the shape of a human wore
Would creep and skulk to its cabin door!

FROM BOHEMIA

A fig for a mansion on the hill;
A fig for an automobile's hum;
Give me instead a roving heart,
A laughing lass and a jug o' rum!

Bright-minded men, if poorly clad,
Whose shafts of wit fly swift as hail;
A café in some little street,
A buxom wench and a mug of ale!

I scorn the thought of a coach-and-four;
I would not ride in trap or hack;
My feet will bring me to an inn,
A waiting-maid and a cup o' sack!

Heigh-ho! Kind sirs, go on your way
To good or ill, and I'll go mine;
A verse, a tune, a keen, rich jest;
A girl to kiss and a glass o' wine!

MY VACATION

I won't go to the seashore,
Where men and women herd;
Where there's no speck of verdure,
No voice of singing bird.
Where silly social customs
Demand all sorts of clothes;
And the only thing which heartens
Is the sea wind, when it blows.

For walls of brick and iron,
And domes of stone and steel,
Have tightened up my forces
Till I can hardly feel.
On the lap of Moloch Business
My soul has quivered, bare;
Now comes my brief vacation,
And I am going—where?

Not to another maelstrom
Where human things are hived,
Who grope in smoky alleys,
Of air and light deprived.
Not where the same grim Devil
Wieldeth his gilded rod;
But *out*—O Christ of Mercy!
To leaves, and birds, and sod!

A shack where birches glisten;
A scented bed of pine;
Where the night-wind croons its message,
And the planets softly shine.

Spindrift

Where the sweet earth yields its fragrance,
And my poor, worn body lies
Beaten and bruised by battle,
Beneath the pitying skies.

O miracle of mercy!
I feel new life leap up
When Nature, kind, compassionate,
Holds to my lips her cup.
And a soft night hovers over;
And a slow stream purls along;
And off in the misty forest,
Some drowsy notes of song.

And that's where I am going.
To re-baptize my soul
In dew, and air, and sunlight,
At that thrice blessed goal.
I'm going to be quickened,
A seared and dried-up clod;
For there, where His hand yet resteth,
I come up close to God!

Verses and Poems

THE STOIC

The stoic is not he who suffers much
From self-inflicted torture without plaint;
Who seeks, with foolish hands, to wound his flesh
In order that he might become a saint.

The stoic is the one who takes Fate's blows
With front serene, and unenvenomed heart;
Who keeps his 'scutcheon clean, and smiles through pain,
Knowing that 'tis of Calvary a part.

THE FOOL

Sometimes I envy him! He eats, and sleeps,
And drinks, and laughs, with time to rest and play.
His kind curse veils always the fearful deeps
Where you and I fight monsters every day!

THE SPIRIT OF THE FALL

Beside a woodland stream whose waters brawl,
All pensive, sits the Spirit of the Fall.
Her garments brown and gold; her shoulders bare;
Her bosom curtained by her loosened hair.
Her brow entwined with maple leaves aglow;
One slim foot stretched to meet the waters flow;
The other pressed deep in the mosses rank
Which grow in rich profusion on the bank.
One rounded elbow rests upon her knee;
With chin in hand, she sits there silently,
Gazing adown the wide ways of the wood
To see each tree splotched with its own life-blood.
The leaves fall gently 'round her, and the breeze
Plays with her shining hair. The drone of bees
Pervades the silence like a muffled lute.
A wood-thrush calls, like sweetest note of flute.
And so she sits, sad-eyed and still, alone;
A beggar queen upon a wildwood throne!

THE GHOST

I stood alone one musky night in June.
The lush growth trembled to an elfin tune,
O'erridden by a nightingale's rich croon.

The soft, black, velvet sky above hung low;
Each gem which glowed therein was polished so
It seemed I might have reached it, on tip-toe.

Then came a ghost—a pallid, wan-faced thing,
Creeping with palsied feet where Pleiads swing
Triumphant 'neath the foot-stool of the King!

And at its coming all the host, in fright,
Shook in their orbits, while some took their flight
In terror down the boundless shores of night!

BENEATH THE TREES

Beneath the trees low voices come to me;
Sweet echoes of the forest's minstrelsy.
The trees have lived so long, they know so much
Of all the things we mortals can not touch.
And as I lie content among their roots,
'Compassed by limbs mature, and budding shoots,
It seems my ears are opened, and I hear
Their wondrous secrets, whispered soft and clear.
What is their message? Should you ask me now,
I could not frame in words what leaf and bough
And tender twig and roughened bole reveal!
I only know my quickened soul can feel
And hear and understand; and sweet indeed
Is this, the learning of the forest's creed.
But each must for himself sip at this well;
Of all its sacred deeps none may not tell.
Yet, coming with a heart possessed of calm,
Upon the seeker's soul will flow a balm
Such as the world's broad marts can never give.
A balm which helps us both to love, and live.

THE STEADFAST HEART

Let who may walk by thee in days of joy;
Let who may help thee golden hours employ;
But when dark Sorrow sits within thy home,
O let me come!

Let who may clasp thee in the rhythmic dance;
Let who may lead thee where still waters glance;
But when the clouds are spread o'er heavens dome,
O let me come!

Let who may help to brighten Life's high noon,
And linger with thee in the fields of June;
But when thou'rt old, and sad, and lonely some,
O let me come!

MILADI

The musk of moonlit meadows in her hair;
The gleam of starlit streamlets in her eyes;
Her pouting lips upheld to taunt and dare
The eager soul post-bound to Paradise.

Her face a garden where sweet flowers grow:
Roses, and pinks, and snow-white lilies, too;
And thither in the eventide I go
And find each flower steeped in honey dew.

O love! you hold my destiny in pawn;
To rise or fall out in the world's broad mart;
I yield ambition to your eyes of dawn,
And to your hands my heart—my bleeding heart!

THE ALTAR

I know a spot that's far away
From the fever-fret of the busy day.

Deep in a woodland hollow cool,
Beside a limpid, forest pool

A gray stone lies, o'erspread with moss,
And lichen its rough sides emboss.

The still, green trees arch overhead;
Below, their shade is thickly spread.

And through the strangely silent air
Creep faintly musky odors rare.

A forest altar is the stone,
And o'er its top a vine has grown,

While the tiger lily's tangled bloom
Like burning fagots light the gloom.

Down at its base, where grasses green
Give back a faint, elusive sheen,

A flower's white flame dimly glows,
Like a lamp in some cathedral's close.

TO JOHN KEATS

An hostler's son! What boots the lowly birth
When manger-born was King of Heaven and Earth!
Pale-featured youth; father of deathless song;
So frail of flesh, of spirit ever strong.
At thy nativity the stars above
Most surely sang for joy, and, sent by love,
A white-winged messenger brought thee a lyre,
And touched thy infant's tongue with poet's fire!
O pity! pity! that the gods of ruth
Should quench the flame immortal in thy youth!
Almost a boy, for six and twenty years
Are short enough to learn of hopes and fears;
Of love, and life, and death, and heaven and hell,
Whose mysteries and wonders thou didst tell.
Thy dying fear was useless—"Here lies one
Whose name was writ in water."—'Neath the sun
No name is more secure, John Keats, than thine,
O hostler's son, who sang with tongue divine!

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Verses and Poems

THE COQUETTE

A coquette maple on a hill
Wantoned with every breeze;
She flouted and jeered with right good will
The looks of her sister trees.

Proud of her queenly head was she,
And proud of her dainty limbs;
A lover bold he needs must be
To conquer her silly whims.

All summer long she toyed and played
With the vagrant breezes there;
Cruel and coy, she pretended afraid
When they rumpled her shining hair.

At last the Summer flew away,
And Fall came on apace;
The coquette maple still was gay,
With her saucy, piquant face.

Then a bolder lover came to woo
This captious sylvan queen;
He clasped her 'round without ado,
And kissed her garments green.

Jack Frost it was who'd won the fight,
And when the morning came
From top to toe—a sorry sight—
She'd turned blood red from shame!

HER LIPS

Her lips are rose leaves steeped in ruby wine;
The world is lost when they are pressed to mine.

Her lips are highways of her heart's rich blood,
Which drowns my senses in its crimson flood.

Her lips are pulsing bows of mellow flame;
To warm my heart there is not wrong, nor shame.

Her lips are portals to a wealth untold,
Where nestle pearls which can't be bought, nor sold.

Her lips are sunbeams wet with honey dew;
Sweeter than any rose that ever grew.

Her lips rob life of every doubt and fear,
When from them gently falls—"I love you, dear!"

THE TREES

O how I love the sturdy, patient trees!
Naught else in Nature holds a charm like these.
Whether in calm, when ghostly words are flung
From leaf to leaf in mystic, wildwood tongue;
Or whether in the awful time of storm,
When each assumes a wild, majestic form,
And, whipped to fury by the goading blast,
Shrieks out its challenge to the tempest vast!
I love them sleeping in the arms of night;
I love them in the blush of morning's light.
In midday's glare, when all the leaves rejoice,
And rustle sylvan secrets in low voice,
And bird-notes wake the silences above
In dreamy chirps, and croonings of wild love—
I love them then; and yet again, when low
The sun is swinging in the western glow,
It is my joy to stand, enrapt and calm,
And feel the blessing of the forest's balm!

THE NUN FLOWER

Deep in the heart of a wooded dell,
Where satin-footed fairies dwell,

There is a cloister, green and cool,
Beside a silver, forest pool.

Intruders never pass this way,
Except the tiny folk o' fay;

And on the cloister's farthest sward,
A white-faced nun keeps watch and ward.

A dark green gown—'most black it seems
Beneath the day's thrice-filtered beams.

And there, upon her down-held head,
A crown of gold glows dully red.

And so within the soft, rich glooms,
The fragile, nun-like flower blooms,

And folk o' fay alone can tell
Why she has come to the cloistered dell.

THE WINTER PALACE

The ancient forest, smitten with the cold,
Lay bare and bleak, a flock without a fold.
The dark night came, and, covered by its cloak,
The icy legions of the North awoke,
And on the trees, defenceless, marched in might,
And wrought with eerie, fairy fingers light.
With searching, tapping touch the rain came first,
And on the moaning wood in fury burst.
Swift on its footsteps rushed the nimble hail,
Which worked and hammered with its missiles pale.
Then came fine-sifted snow, pure lace-work laid
Upon the glory which the rest had made;
And then moon-dawn. O'er all the ancient wood
In streams of silver ran a wondrous flood;
And where the trees had been, all stripped and shorn
Behold! A gleaming palace has been born!
Vast chambers hung with arras multifold,
And starred with rich designs of pearl and gold.
Tall peaks and spires a-glitter with a sheen
Which rivals in its splendor garb of green.
Long corridors whose floors are paved with gems
Which might have dropped from crowns of seraphims!
Rare fresco work of jasper, onyx, brass,
With topaz tints where changing facets mass.
Like pagan court bedecked with jewels fine,
From whence have passed the courtiers, song and wine;
Majestic, marvelous, the palace stands,
Triumphant work of art not made by hands!

Spindrift

THE FOREST AT DAWN

Great, gnarled shapes bulk dimly, where the slow
And sleepy brooklet trails its tinkling flow;
And over head the still leaves whisper low.

A quivering day-beam steals into the place,
Lighting the vague wood-aisle as by God's grace,
And shining on a wakened violet's face!

FATHERHOOD

I could not tread the path you went last night,
O my beloved! with your eyes of awe;
It was a time when my protecting might
Could bring no shield between you and life's law.

I could not even guard you on your way,
Nor share one little mite of all your pain;
I could but wait, and hope, and dumbly pray
That you would safely come to me again.

And you have come. I do not seem to know
I am a father. . . . All my thoughts outpour
To you, who last night felt the undertow;
Safe in the haven of my heart once more.

THE MIRACLE

I came in the winter twilight
And stood before a tree;
All bare and gaunt and empty
Its limbs stretched over me.

No sign of life it offered;
No trace of verdure showed;
A wraith of its summer beauty,
It stood beside the road.

I came at a later season,
And viewed again the tree;
And lo! the tips of its branches
Were touched with mystery!

A voice from the void had spoken;
A messenger had sped,
And the roots of the tree had answered—
Had thrilled in their hidden bed.

Again my feet went thither,
And the miracle was done;
A whispering pyramid of leaves
Glistened beneath the sun!

Spindrift

THE DÉBUTANTE

Lord of the innocent, guard safe her soul,
And keep her life's fair craft from hidden shoal.
From storm, and tempest's stress, which try the heart
In tender mercy, keep Thou her apart.
The path is new, the footing insecure;
Keep thou—in loving kindness—keep her pure.
Stretch forth Thine arm of power o'er her head,
And by still waters let her feet be led;
That, through the days and nights of her life's years
Her heart may not be torn with bitter tears.
And in the end, when gently falls the night,
Still let her soul be white—O Lord, be white!

IF I COULD KNOW

If I could know, when each day dies,
I had brought joy to tired eyes—

If I could know, when falls each night,
I'd helped to make some child's life bright—

If I could know, at set of sun,
The fruit of some good deed I'd done—

I'd count my life of grander mold,
Than if I'd simply gathered gold.

Verses and Poems

LOVE SONG

O you are a sweet wild rose to me,
Girl of the red-fire lips;
From your heart an essence flows to me,
And deep in my soul it slips.

A woodland rose you are to me,
Colorful, fragrant, cool;
A low-swung, throbbing star to me
Beside a forest pool.

Your hair is a smoky cloud to me,
With odors of moss and fern.
When your red-fire lips are bowed to me
Their kisses thrill and burn.

Your face is a rose in the dusk to me,
Velvet soft, and warm;
But your rounded grace is a husk to me,
Holding the spirit form.

And if an altar you are to me,
Where the best of my life is laid;
I make no plea—from afar to me
You have come, O wild-rose maid!

IN THE VALLEY

I would not seek the heights;
Let me, instead, stay in the sheltered vale,
Where I may gather strength which will not fail
On fierce and stormy nights.

I love the valley sweet;
I hear the fierce gale sweeping overhead;
But by still waters have my feet been led,
Safe in my low retreat.

No harm can reach me here.
Encompassed by life's best and purest things,
My soul is joyful, and my glad heart sings,
Forever free from fear.

Why is the valley best?
I saw a storm bolt crush a mighty tree,
And at its foot a tiny flower free
From harm, on Nature's breast.

MY BELIEF

I would not hold it honor
 To gain an envied height,
And leave upon the battlefield
 My sense of what was right.

I would not be victorious
 If I should grasp high fame,
And feel within my troubled heart
 The gnawing fangs of shame.

I would not count me blessed
 To have the wealth of kings,
If from the path I'd trod should leap
 The ghosts of murdered things.

But let me cleave to honor,
 And gentleness, and cheer;
That I may tread the low, sweet ways,
 With a soul that does not fear.]

BEDTIME

Come, little lad, it's time to snuggle down.

Don't mind the blocks; I'll pick them up to-night.
What is the matter with this tangled gown?

Ah! Now I see. I'm taking left for right.

Hold up your sleepy chin a wee bit more.

I never saw a buttonhole so small.

There; now you're fixed.—Yes, I will shut the door.

What?—You don't think the beanstalk grew so tall?

Here, let's kneel down beside your little bed,

And I will listen while you say them through.

Watch out, old man! You'll bump that drowsy head!

Come on now, quick;—and then I'll say "Boy Blue."

My good-night hug—a kiss—and down you go!

Stop wriggling so! I'll never tuck you in!

I wonder if this quilt stays?—Do you know?

All right.—You say you're lying on a pin?

Now, kiddie, let's be off to By-low Town.

Where's mother?—Why—why, she has gone away;

But—we'll go to her.—Want me to sit down

And hold your hand? Now, what piece shall I say?

Verses and Poems

IN AN OLD GARDEN BEFORE DAWN

Like sentinels which guard their comrades' sleep,
The hollyhocks a faithful vigil keep;

Thick-set with bugles pointing toward the sky.

Peonies, heavy-headed, slumber nigh;

Or red, or white, or splashed with crimson stain,

Their petals fresh and sweet from summer rain.

A multitude of roses intertwine

Their dagger-laden stems. A creeping vine

Has used the spikes, and climbed up in the air;

And dawn will bring the morning-glory fair.

A-swing within his silken hammock gray,

The killer spider waits the coming day.

A gleam of scarlet in a corner dim,

Where Poppy nods upon her neck so slim,

Unheedful of the beetle at her feet

Which lies inert, drugged by her presence sweet.

A drop of moisture on her wine-red lip;

A snare for any bee which dares to sip.

And yonder stand the lilies, bathed in dew,

Like sweet white nuns who've prayed the long night
through.

And as the dawn-breeze comes with whispered word,

So that the softly sleeping blooms are stirred,

A great, gray moth, awaked from sleep somewhere,

Goes sailing down the perfumed paths of air.

WORK

I don't care how much money you may have,
Nor what your standing socially may be;
I don't care whether you go clad in rags,
Or flaunt a dress suit at an evening tea.
It matters not how red your blood may run,
Or whether grandpa's nothing but a name;
One thing is sure as sunrise, and that is
If you don't work, you're cheating in the game.

You may be fixed so you don't have to toil,
Unlike the fellows in the counting-rooms,
Or those who guide the plow, or swing the axe,
Or those immured within the foundrys' glooms.
You may wear six or seven suits a day,
And light a cigar with a ten-spot's flame;
But facts are facts, no matter who you are:
If you don't work, you're cheating in the game.

And you're the one who gets the rough end, too.
You may think you're enjoying life just fine,
But nothing takes the place of something done;
That gets into your blood like good old wine.
I know that when I've done a task right well,
So well that none can speak a word of blame,
There's nothing brings a feeling half so good:
If you don't work, you're cheating in the game.

Verses and Poems

I don't mean pecking rocks upon the road,
Though that's not bad; I know things worse by far.
But brain or brawn each day must do its stint,
And that that's done will show us what we are.
An idler's shoes are viler than a thief's,
I'd rather rob, and take it lesser shame.
Life sounds the call to action every morn:
If you don't work, you're cheating in the game.

Spindrift

THE SPHINX

Forever it has stood, forever mute,
 Gazing with sightless eyes into the past;
Its seamed face, of piled-up years the fruit,
 Turned to the mysterious desert vast.
Wisdom inscrutable upon its brow,
 And knowledge of dead years upon its face;
For of the lifeless Past, the living Now
 It is, and centuries have given place
To others, since the Pharaohs' cunning hand
 Upreared this aged Sentry of the Nile.
While century-waves are breaking on Time's strand
 It stays, upon its carven face a smile.
Mocking all humankind; a voiceless sage;
Knowing all things, yet dumb, from age to age.

BIRTH

Close-hung with silence was the darkened room;
 Through starlit distances there came to earth
A thread from off God's never-ceasing loom:
 To mortals known—the miracle of birth.

Verses and Poems

APRIL

Light-hearted jade, made of caprice and whim,
With smile and frown alternate on her face,
Her hair a-tangle from a wild, mad race
With rain-wet winds blown from the forest dim.
Her big eyes sparkling with the wine of life
Fresh drunk from Earth's great chalice, newly filled,
Her form scant-vestured, bounding free, and thrilled
With tones orchestral, as of flute and fife.
Abandonment of joy, and careless dance;
Her daily life a constant change of mood:
Sulking with frowns amid the moldy wood;
Shouting with joy when pierced by sunlight's lance.
With hoyden feet she skims the budding plain,
With sullen looks she lurks in shadows drear,
Alloyed with joy and sorrow, love and fear,
She laughs and sobs the sunshine and the rain.

THE BRAVEST ONE

The bravest one is not the one who stands
Voicing his valor from the housetops high;
But rather him who hides a broken heart
Beneath a smile. Could you do this?—Could I?

Spindrift

LONGING

The dreamy trees 'neath the autumn moon
Hold a spell like my love for you;
The drowsy notes of a night-bird's croon
Come sweet through the dripping dew.

The bosky depths where the twining vines
Hold each in a close embrace,
Send forth perfume like mingled wines,
And I hunger to kiss your face.

In the lotos-land which your arms create
There is this, and more, for me;
There is wine, and dreams, and a laugh at Fate,
And Life's dark mystery!

A DERELICT

Across the shadowed sea at twilight hour,
A ship comes stealing in the wake of day.
No sail-clad masts above her low hull tower.
No captain's voice; no sailors to obey.
A derelict, nothing more.

Across Life's twilight sea a ship comes sailing,
A shattered wreck, it drifts upon the stream.
About its seaméd sides lost hopes are trailing,
Ambition gone, and blighted each fair dream.
A derelict, nothing more.

Verses and Poems

DECEMBER

Now who is this that comes with head bent low,
And lagging feet which creep across the snow?
This worn-out frame, all bloodless, thin, and pale,
Which bends and shivers in the icy gale?
It is December passing, old and grey,
Athwart the world's bleak stage at close of day!
Her white hair whipped in snaky ringlets 'round
Her sunken cheeks by bitter winds, whose sound
Is far and eerie in her deafened ears.
In swirls of snow each sharp blast disappears
Adown some rabbit-haunted, bare, tree-sentried glen.
From topmost branch the crow's call comes again.
A sheeted ghost upon a sheeted world;
A wraith of Winter o'er the bleak earth hurled!

THE SAGE

Wrapped 'round with Wisdom like a cloak, he stands,
The Book of Life wide open in his hands.
To him Earth's secrets are as children's play;
He passes by the things for which men pray.
Far back in cells of memory are hid
Thoughts, which in form would make a pyramid.
Beneath the white crown which he calmly wears
Lie potent contradictions to all doubts, all fears.
Learning sits silent, its just meed to pay,
And Knowledge hangs its head, and slinks away.
Earth holds for him no mystery untold;
No hidden thing which men would buy with gold.
Yet, like a child he stands, helpless and dumb,
Before that wall which marks the life to come!

TO AN OCTOBER ROSE

O beautiful emblem of summer,
 Blooming alone to-day;
Sweet ghost of thy fair companions,
 Which brightened the gardens of May;

Art lonely to-day, little flower?
 Art cold when night comes on?
Is thy garment of dew too chilly?
 Don't you sigh for the sun-bright dawn?

Thou wert born too late, little flower,
 For the joys which should be thine.
For the wooing of summer zephyrs,
 For the drinking of warm sunshine.

Sweet ghost of thy dead companions,
 Thou art out of place to-day;
For thee are the blossoming meadows,
 And the burgeoning gardens of May.

GREATNESS

A sculptor put his hand to unhewn stone,
And lo! there grew a beauteous face, which shone
As though endowed with life. "Well done!" men said;
And laurel wreaths entwined about his head.

The sculptor died. His name was blazoned high
Among the great of earth. From sea to sky
The world re-echoed to his wondrous deed.
Enduring honor was the sculptor's meed.

An aged peasant, by a wayside drear,
Dug him a well, deep down to water clear.
"He's mad," men said, "to waste his labor so;
"Twill do no good; no one will ever know."

The peasant died;—scarce any knew his name—
And was forgotten. One day a stranger came
With thirst o'erworn. He drank, and breathed a prayer
Upon the man who'd placed that fountain there.

THE DAWN OF DAY

Now argosies upon aerial seas
Sail to a bourne of which we knoweth naught
Of name or place.

Upon the fleecy bulwark rails of these
Dim ships of night, of ghostly vapor wrought
Far off in space

A lambent light, pale hued, doth fitful play.
What cargo do their filmy hulls conceal?
As on they sail.

Perhaps it is the prayers which we did say,
Perhaps an unknown joy which we may feel
When strength doth fail.

No pilot guides them on their silent way,
No helmsman grasps the wheel with steady hand
The course to keep.

But look! the far off east is growing gray;
Yet still, in majesty, a spectral band,
They onward sweep.

With pearl-like tints the eastern sky grows bright,
To us sweet harbinger of unborn Day,
When Night has fled.

And now a spear cast with Herculean might
O'er the horizon dim speeds on its way.
Far overhead

Verses and Poems

It strikes, amid that strange, aerial fleet.
Swift fly the shafts from off Aurora's bow;
A golden hue
Tinges the sky where earth and heaven meet.
Night's squadrons to the west in tumult go,
And day-beams woo

The tender flowers awak'ning from their sleep.
Dawn stands triumphant on the world's far verge
In grandeur drest.
One hand upheld, the other with a sweep
Flings back the gates of Morn! A mighty surge
From east to west

Of unpent light which courses through the sky,
Coming from o'er the distant mountain peaks—
And Day is here!
Far up above some shapeless clouds roll by,
But for the argosies we vainly seek,
For none are there!

AT THE CHANCEL RAIL

At the chancel rail my lady kneels,
And down the nave there softly steals
 A gently whispered prayer.
The altar lights all dimly burn,
Their radiance shines on silvered urn,
 And on my lady's hair.

An angel in that holy place
The altar rail could no more grace
 Than does my lady now.
I see those soft gray eyes upraise,
Alight with innocence' own gaze,
 None half so sweet, I vow.

A creature free from taint of sin,
With unstained heart she kneels within
 The sanctuary old.
And as I watch her kneeling there
A falling sunbeam smites her hair
 And turns it all to gold.

The quaint old church grows dimmer still,
The Angelus the air doth fill
 With passing cadence sweet.
And still she kneels, and still I wait;
I, unbeliever, daring Fate;
 She, at her Master's feet.

Verses and Poems

I wonder now whose name she breathes?
Some dear one—for her bosom heaves,
And now there comes to me
A sigh from out her guileless heart,
So soft and sweet it seems a part
Of heaven's minstrelsy.

Whose name she breathes? I bend my head,
Adown the nave with airy tread
There speeds a name I know.
'Tis I for whom she prays this eve,
'Tis for my soul she asks reprieve,
There in the twilight glow.

And I? I love her with a love
Which caught its fervor from above,
And can I say her nay?
Since He has given me my bride,
I'll own Him Master at her side;
For God is Love, they say.

With head unbared, with pride subdued,
And heart with rapture all imbued
I seek my lady there.
One heavenly look of glad surprise,
Which gathers in her glorious eyes;
And then we kneel in prayer.

MY FLUTE

O magic piece of wood, I love you so!
I breathe into your ivory lips, and lo!
 Your dark shape trembles with the breath of life;
 Your soul with unsung melody is rife;
And now the first sweet notes come, faint and low.

Did you, perchance, in some primeval wood,
Store up the song of wind, and bird, and flood,
 And hold them safe until you came to me?
 My lips have wooed all of these things from thee
When in thy wakened presence I have stood.

O magic piece of wood, what is thy spell?
Whence cometh the sweet secrets thou dost tell?
 The ages' songs come down to me through you;
 I see the lightning strike—the rose in dew;
And hear the cadence of a passing bell.

EARLY AUTUMN

There is a whisper in the withered grass,
From whence the sun has drawn the spirit sap;
Deep in the hollow, sluggish wavelets lap
The jutting stones 'mid which they idly pass.
And silence, sweet as peace,
Bides with the year's increase.

The mast of beechnut, acorn, chinquapin,
Yet cling to boughs with slight-enfeebled hold.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow—and the mold
Will be enriched by that it gathers in.
And tiny feet will speed
Hungry mouths to feed.

Pale sunlight streaming through a columned grove;
And here, with straying feet, a form glides by.
Straw-hued her garments, fashioned wondrously
Of vine and leaf and tendril interwove.
Her hair a ruddy crown;
Her pensive face bent down.

THE DREAMS AHEAD

What would we do in this world of ours,
Were it not for the dreams ahead?
For thorns are mixed with the blooming flowers
No matter which path we tread.

And each of us has his golden goal,
Stretching far into the years;
And ever he climbs with hopeful soul,
With alternate smiles and tears.

That dream ahead is what holds him up
Through the storms of a ceaseless fight;
When his lips are pressed to wormwood's cup,
And clouds shut out the light.

To some it's a dream of a high estate;
To some it's a dream of wealth;
To some it's a dream of a truce with Fate
In a ceaseless search for health.

To some it's a dream of home and wife;
To some, of a crown above.
The dreams ahead are what make each life:
The dreams, and faith, and love.

SUMMER

Attired in Nature's wild, barbaric dress,
A gorgeous orchid which the soft winds bless;
Warm palms outheld in invitation glad
To faun and nymph, or satyr and dryad.
With breast half bared to every wanton breeze
Which, whispering, steals between the joyous trees,
And unbound tresses lifting to the kiss
Of sun-warmed zephyrs from the hills of bliss.
Like limpid forest pools her dark eyes glow;
With languorous, feline movements, soft and slow,
She glides from couch of moss to couch of leaves,
While 'round her brows the wood-gnomes garlands weave:
Binding her milk-white ankles with green strands
Of maidenhair, and other filmy bands,
Or lulling her to sweet, perfumed repose,
With sleeping-draught of violet and rose.

MIDDAY IN SUMMER

Long grasses waving in the orchard-space,
With trunks of apple trees bird pecked and rough;
The drowsy drone of bees throughout the place,
And every breath of wind a perfumed puff.

Black-bitten by the insects, in the trees
The fruit hangs over-ripe, each rotten speck
A wound made by some bandit of the breeze,
Which strides with vicious buzz his airy deck.

High overhead a phantom fleet lies still,
Anchored in sea of deepest, purest blue.
Their vapor shapes await the currents' will;
Their misty bulwarks changing to the view.

Slow waves of warmth, and silence, save the cheep
Of restless bird, half sickened by the heat,
Which sits upon its perch almost asleep:
And clear upsprings the cricket's anvil-beat.

AUGUST

Long hours of heat—of shimmering, fierce heat,
Which on the tortured earth in tide waves beat.
On iridescent wing the dragon-fly
Darts o'er the stagnant pond, now nearly dry.
And down the path, white hot with powdered dust
Go swine, beplastered with dry mud, like rust.
The royal purple of the iron-weed
Is turning brown, and where pokeberries bleed
Their bursting hearts out by the fencerow old
Gleam sumach's fiery garments, fold on fold.
The grass burned brown and brittle, plumes of it
Rustling along the hillside—thrones where sit
The mottled grasshopper, reigning for a day
O'er bunch of herbage, and a strip of clay.
The shrilling din of locusts in the tree;
The lazy flight of honey-laden bee;
The distant sound of a woodpecker's drum,
And Nature praying for the night to come.

THE CHAPEL

In the heart of a woodland's leafy screen
A chapel stands, all draped in green.

Its carpet is moss of texture rare;
Its altar a stone, and trailing there

Are feathery fronds of fairest ferns,
And in their midst one white star burns

With a flare of yellow in its heart
Which glows in the dusk like a lamp apart.

Its fluted columns are ages old,
And twining round them, fold on fold

Go the tendriled tiger-lily's strands
In warm caress, like loving hands.

The lily swings its censer-cup,
Shedding its perfume down and up.

And lo! as evening shadows blur
The silences, there comes a stir,

And welling clear, and sweet and strong,
The vesper of a wild bird's song.

THE HUNGRY HEART

You've given me an honored place,
I know I have the power to grace.

You've given me your worthy name,
Free from reproach, or cloud, or blame.

Your mansion, rising granite strong,
Will shelter me my whole life long.

Your wealth is mine to squander free,
And hosts of women envy me.

In ease and luxury I bide
From morning glow till eventide.

I'd give it all to hear you say
A little word of love each day.

THE WASTED HOURS

Along Life's path they lie—unsightly things;
And every one a two-edged sword which stings.
Could we but have them back, those wasted hours,
Though they be heavy with the scent of flowers
And memoried with idle joys now gone;
Of midnight wassail and of wide-eyed dawn.
How grudgingly each moment would go by!
(We watched them passing once with careless eye)
Like to a miser clutching at his gold
Each precious one we'd strive to grasp and hold.
Each moment is a jewel; throw it down—
One gem the less will gleam in your life's crown.
Some few are wise, and claim each day their own;
And some—from dawn till dusk but tares are sown.
Some bend their brain and body to the toil,
Nor storm nor strife can their ambition foil.
Some loiter, drowsy, in their lotus-bowers,
And reap the barren fruit of wasted hours.

WINTER

Gray-gowned, austere, with hoary, wind-tossed hair,
And bony knuckles gripped about a staff
Of gnarled oak-wood, which, with shriek and laugh
He'd wrested from its parent stem all bare.
With this to aid his stumbling, frost-bit feet,
He breathes his chilly breath through lips cold-drawn.
The herbage shrinks and shrivels; dusk and dawn
Succeeding bitterness of cold repeat.
He lifts his arm—so smitten with the frost
A bony menace to the earth it seems.
A bleak sun-ray low on the upland gleams
Then, bosomed by a cloud, its light is lost.
The gray, gaunt figure turns a northward gaze,
And calls his legions down of hail and snow;
Then his slow footsteps to the southward go,
To wander in a ghostly, swirling haze.

SPRING

Full-draped in palest green a sweet wraith glides
 Among the trees long held in Winter's grasp;
 Her fairy fingers break each icy clasp
In doleful hollows, and on dank hillsides.
Her girdle is a filmy band of light;
 Her flowing hair is bound with tender leaves,
 And with a sap-charged wand she deftly weaves
A charm above the breast of Nature white.
Her face exultant, and her radiant form
 Pulses with new-born vigor from the sod.
 And lo! the paths her magic feet have trod
Break into life; life glorious and warm!
And down, and up, with regal mien she goes;
 The brooklet quivers; slumbering seeds awake;
 The thousand hearts of Nature stir and quake,
And verdure smiles where lately lay the snows.

MARCH

A half wild creature cast from Winter's lap;
 A vagrant reveler in Nature's courts;
 With wind-dishevelled hair, she madly sports
With twig and bough, surcharged with rising sap.
Possessed of frenzy which knows naught of rest,
 Her slim brown arms upflung in mood insane,
 She rivals with swift feet the driving rain,
And makes of every day a crazy jest.
She rushes fiercely down the hillsides steep,
 And dashes through forsaken forest aisles
 Where last year's leaves lie deep in sombre piles.
With furious wrath she routs them from their sleep.
And so for days her reckless reign extends;
 Teased and tormented Nature groans outright,
 Until, at last, the madcap thing takes flight,
And gentle April comes to make amends.

JUNE

Orchestra-led by wildwood, gypsy tune,
Her bosom filled with musks of morn and noon;
Her flowing hair rose-braided and entwined
With fragrant, blooming things of every kind—
June wanders smiling through the green-hung ways
Which deck the calendar of summer days.
Her rich lips with rare woodland wines are red;
Her breath the perfume of the violet's bed;
Her eyes sweet wells where light and shadow play,
Her self a shrine where nymph and naiad pray.

THE FACTORY

A crouching monster waiting for its prey.
At morn it gathers in young hearts, and strong;
Crushes their lives out through the hours long,
And spews the refuse forth at close of day.

TWO ROSES

One was white as the mountain snow,
Or a woman's bosom fair;
One was red as the sunset glow,
Or the wine which mocks at Care.
And thus they grew, these roses two,
In the balmy hot-house air.

"What use is our lives?" the red rose said
One day, to her sister flower.
"As for living here, we'd as well be dead,
"For we grace no lady's bower."
But the white rose sighed, and soft replied:
"Some day you'll know our power."

And true, one day a woman came,
And she gazed on the roses there.
Her lips like the red rose' petals of flame,
Her brow like the white rose fair.
For a while she stood in doubting mood,
Then said: "This one I'll wear."

So she plucked the rose with the petals red,
And she placed it on her breast.
Then low she bowed her haughty head,
And her lips the bloom caressed.
"He will see it there, in the ball-room's glare;
"He likes this rose the best."

Spindrift

In the whirl of the dance the red rose died,
And was trodden by slippered feet;
And no one wept, and no one sighed,
For its broken petals sweet.
All soiled and torn, and old and worn,
Its life was done, complete.

But the snow-white rose had a mission too,
A mission far more dear.
One came and gathered it as it grew,
And bore it to a bier.
And gave it rest on a still, cold breast;
On its stainless head a tear.

WHY IS THIS?

I saw a youth by high ambition torn,
Girded for conquest in Life's rosy morn.
Asking for health alone wherewith to fight:
Fate gave him a disease which was his blight.

I saw another, without end or aim,
Pilfering pleasure from each day that came.
Endowed by Fate with strength for any fray,
He lived a swine's life until old and gray.

THE DANCE

Glare of lights and floor like glass;
Whisper of feet which swiftly pass;
Charm of an hour which hints of dawn;
Beauty tired in the arms of Brawn.

Sigh of horn and laugh of flute;
Wail of violin under mute;
Cornet treble, and threading all
The double-bass's throbbing call.

Eyes of splendor with love alight;
Supple forms in silks bedight;
Glint of gems and shimmer of lace;
Strength of man, and woman's grace.

Heated bodies which bend and sway;
Heated hearts with pleasure gay;
Wonder of beauty and snare of youth;
Allies bold which know no ruth.

Perfume floating from satin skin,
Mocking the strength of the soul within;
Bidding the weary feet press on,
Treading the moments which lead to dawn.

AT THE FERRY

When I stand at the ferry some night,
Will the river be gloomy or bright?

Will shadows envelope the stream,
Or will light from the far shore gleam?

Will my heart be filled with fear
As the boatman grim draws near?

Shame, O my soul, to think
That with fear I'll approach the brink!

For tenderer feet than mine
Fared this way to resign

Their owner dear to him,
Who pilots the boat so dim.

And I know she spoke my name,
When into the craft she came.

LITTLE BROTHER

Your hands are soft, little brother,
And they grasp the tender things;
But the time will come, little brother,
For cuts, and burns, and stings.

Your head is fair, little brother,
Where the mother's kiss drops down;
But in after years, little brother,
You will know the thorny crown.

Your feet are pink, little brother,
As you lie on your quilted bed;
But anon they'll ache, little brother,
As mire and stones they tread.

Your eyes are clear, little brother,
As a tree-encircled bay;
But tears will blur, little brother,
When you start on the long life-way.

Your heart is pure, little brother,
As a well where the fairies drink;
But Life holds a cup, little brother,
And sorrow flows over the brink.

Your soul is white, little brother,
As the Master-Soul is white;
But sin lurks near, little brother,
To foul with its deadly blight.

Spindrift

And I would not shield, little brother,
For all of my love for you;
It's the only way, little brother,
To find if we're false, or true.

The battle is yours, little brother,
If you'll hold to the road that's straight;
And the guerdon is yours, little brother,
When you pass through the Sunset Gate.

SEA SONG

A stiff breeze home, and the bow-spray fine
Coating my face with a gauze o' brine.
The black swells writhing serpent-wise,
And clear in the gloom two sweet, sweet eyes,
—Your eyes!

The harbor lights gleam out ahead—
But the sea can never hold a dread
For me, dear heart, when, human-warm
I feel on my neck a soft, white arm,
—Your arm!

The stars go out and the clouds drive down
And blurred are the lights of the harbor town;
But what care I for the tempest's shriek
When firm to my own is laid a cheek,
—Your cheek!

And now as we glide across the bar
I turn, and look to where you are,
Snug at my side like a nesting dove,
And I know—I know the bliss of love,
—Your love!

VISIONS

Sometimes, when satin-footed shadows creep—
A ghostly legion on the misty lawn
Which comes to put your flower-friends to sleep
And hold them safe against another dawn—
Between the day and night, across the grass,
Sometimes, sweetheart, I think I see you pass.

Sometimes, when fireglow sinks to embers red,
I sit alone, where once we sat, of old;
My heart refuseth to be comforted
For that your going left it bare and cold.
As gloom and firelight subtly interwine,
Sometimes I think I feel your hand in mine.

Sometimes, when moonlight calms the strife of earth,
And midnight finds me out beneath the stars;
Within my soul a strange, celestial birth
Comes gently, and high heaven's door unbars.
And in the glad pain of that moment's grace,
Sometimes, sweetheart, I think I see your face.

AND IS THIS LIFE?

And is this life? To wrestle day by day
With Fate for that mean wage she hates to pay;
That starveling wage which soul and body keeps
In friendship strained. The spirit's furthest deeps
Cries out in protest loud at all its woe!
Unruffled, calm, the grim years onward go.
And I, beneath their pall, with prayer and groan,
Alternate fight and faint, bereft, alone.

And this is Life!

And is this life? Can all this be for me?
The warm, sweet air, the sun, and bird, and bee,
And grass, and flowers, and gently waving trees,
And all bright things—am I the heir of these?
Dear eyes of love; a friend's strong hand to hold;
(Possessions better than a mine of gold)
Joy in my work, while Time his shuttle plies;
The will to win, 'neath gray or sunny skies—

And this is Life!

AWAKENING

I thought me worn with the world's dull care;
I thought I bore more than my share.
I was free from want, though without wealth;
I had love, and friends, and robust health.

But nevertheless my soul complained;
With ills unnumbered my mind was pained.
Until, one day, came a truer birth,
And I knew I was blessed beyond my worth.

I saw one passing, poorly clad,
But his head was up, and his soul was glad.
He smiled as he shifted the load he bore,
And strode with a song before my door.

Adown the road I could hear it ring,
And the woods sent back its echoing!
And I learned the lesson, then and there,
Which a brave heart offers everywhere.

REMEMBRANCE

Far in the South I know a garden's close,
Where leaves of tropic plants gleam glossy green;
Where nothing that will fret is heard or seen,
And sweetest melody forever flows.

There, richly opulent, strange blooms unfold
Their petals; yellow, crimson, white, and cream.
There, bubble-laden, glides a crystal stream,
And vaguely circling 'round a wall, so old.

There, bowered 'mid the flowers of the South,
I saw her first, her beauty poppy-crowned;
And there, where swooning blossoms strewed the ground
I tasted first the nectar of her mouth!

The mad, glad nights of joy! The white moon there
A priest to shrive us if our love was wrong.
The passion of a hidden night-bird's song;
The unbound glory of her tawny hair!

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Litsey, Edwin Carlile
Spindrift

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